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Alexander Cooley

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Alexander Cooley : Great Games, Local Rules: The New Great Power Contest in Central Asia before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Great Games, Local Rules: The New Great Power Contest in Central Asia:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Nicely doneBy BBI like that Mr. Cooley doesn't settle for the facile, surface explanations for what is going on in Central Asia. He gets done in the weeds and it is interesting there. However, it is dense, heavy going work down in the weeds.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Do you

need an appreciation of Central Asian security? This is your book! By ZACH ELKING Great book about an underappreciated region. It really is the way it is because of Great powers and Ideological struggles that tear nation-states to pieces. Perfect condition as well. 2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Welcome and timely analysis of great power impact on Central Asia. By twinaiken Cooley delves into the interplay between authoritarian Central Asian regimes and external great power interests in the region. Instead of the assumption that Russia, China and the USA having a free hand in the region, he convincingly shows that local governments have entrepreneurially-exploited the agendas of outside powers to bolster their own regimes, and often, rent-seeking elites have lined their pockets at the same time. He also demonstrates that there is a surprising degree of cooperation and accommodation amongst outside powers in the region and that their objectives are not always in conflict as assumed by the weary 'Great Game' paradigm often invoked for explaining the politics of post-Soviet Central Asia. The work also serves as a very useful and insightful update generally on the unfolding politics of the region. Strongly recommended for politics and IR courses dealing with the area, as well as for any IR courses looking at great power interaction with and management of client states.

The struggle between Russia and Great Britain over Central Asia in the nineteenth century was the original "great game." But in the past quarter century, a new "great game" has emerged, pitting America against a newly aggressive Russia and a resource-hungry China, all struggling for influence over the same region, now one of the most volatile areas in the world: the long border region stretching from Iran through Pakistan to Kashmir. In *Great Games, Local Rules*, Alexander Cooley, one of America's most respected international relations scholars, explores the dynamics of the new competition for control of the region since 9/11. All three great powers have crafted strategies to increase their power in the area, which includes Afghanistan and the former Soviet republics of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan. Each nation is pursuing important goals: basing rights for the US, access to natural resources for the Chinese, and increased political influence for the Russians. However, overlooked in all of the talk about this new great game is fact that the Central Asian governments have proven themselves critical agents in their own right, establishing local rules for external power involvement that serve to fend off foreign interest. As a result, despite a decade of intense interest from the United States, Russia, and China, Central Asia remains a collection of segmented states, and the external competition has merely reinforced the sovereign authority of the individual Central Asian governments. A careful and surprising analysis of how small states interact with great powers in a vital region, *Great Games, Local Rules* greatly advances our understanding of how global politics actually works in the contemporary era.

.com .com Exclusive: QA with Alexander Cooley, Author of *Great Games, Local Rules* You talk about the importance of Central Asia as being forward-looking, rather than backward looking. What do you mean? The original Great Game of the 19th century the British and Russian empires in a competition for influence in Central Asia. This is the metaphor that is now used to describe current relations among Russia, the United States and China in the region. But the metaphor is misleading for 2 reasons: First, it underestimates the political agency and savviness of the Central Asian states themselves--they are not passive pawns, even if they are relatively "weak". As independent states with they actively spark eternal interest and use this outside engagement for their own benefit. Second, relying on the "Great Game metaphor" prevents us from seeing what's most important about Central Asia as a region in contemporary world politics: it has become a laboratory for understanding the dynamics of multipolar politics or what Fareed Zakaria and others now refer to as the "post-Western world." The decline of US soft power and its political standing, the quiet rise of China as a provider of public goods such as development loans and infrastructure, and the backlash against the West's so-called value agenda of democracy and human rights that we see in Central Asia are all now playing out in other regions like Africa, Southeast Asia and the Middle East. This savviness on the part of Central Asian governments is embodied in what you refer to as "local rules"--what are they and why are they important? Three seem particularly important: First, Central Asian governments, above all else, seek to preserve their regimes, which leads them to conflate and guard against both external threats and internal political challenges. Second, Central Asian elites tend to use resources and revenue streams acquired by the state for their own personal benefit. We saw a dramatic example of this in 2009 when President Kurmanbek Bakiyev of Kyrgyzstan launched a base-bidding war between the United States and Russia over the future status of the US air base at Manas. Third, the Central Asian elites have become effective brokers between the pressures and demands of the outside world, and satisfying their political constituents and domestic patronage machines. You speak of US policy towards Central Asia as being instrumentalized in the service of the Afghanistan campaign. What do you mean? Since 9/11 Central Asia has been treated mostly a staging area for US operational needs in Afghanistan, not a region worthy of broader engagement on its own merits. The United States quickly established military bases in the region and secured overflight and refueling agreements with all of the Central Asian states. Since 2008, and the deterioration in the security of NATO supply lines in Pakistan, it has also opened the so-called Northern Distribution Network, an impressive transportation chain that spans the Eurasian landmass in an effort to bring supplies to Afghanistan via Central Asia. The US has also increased

military assistance to the Central Asian countries, especially in support of counterterrorism training and border management. All of these forms of engagement have been conducted in the service of the Afghan campaign, leading to the privileging of security cooperation over other issues. Now that the US along with NATO forces are withdrawing from the Afghanistan we are likely to see a further instrumentalization of the region, as the US uses the NDN to ship equipment out and tries to ensure regional stability during the drawdown. What have been the effects of this great power interest for democratization and human rights on the region? Unfortunately, the cumulative effect has been negative as we've witnessed a steady deterioration of democracy and human rights across the region. Of course, the regional trends in these areas were negative to begin with, but, as I detail in the book, the engagement of multiple great powers, all trying to curry favor with the Central Asian governments, has empowered these local rulers to pare down outside demands for political reforms, while the global war on terror has permitted a broader targeting and crackdown on political opponents. This is also a region where the United States, Russia and China have all cooperated with Central Asians security services in conducting extraordinary renditions of accused terrorists and alleged political extremists. What about China's role in the region. How would you describe China's importance? China's rise as a regional power in the short space of 10 years has been nothing short of extraordinary. Beijing has finalized lingering Soviet-era border disputes, has secured the cooperation of Central Asian governments in its efforts to crackdown on Uighur separatist activity in its Western province of Xinjiang, while China is now the region's most important single trading partner and has built important new pipelines to bring Central Asian oil and gas eastward. It has done all this while putting a multilateral face to its activities by founding and promoting the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, a new-style regional group that rejects Western practices of imposing universal values or interfering in the sovereignty of its members. And Russia--this used to be Soviet territory. How is Russia handling its imperial disengagement? There is no doubt that Russia is still the single most important outside power in the region and still holds a number of levers of influence, including monitoring the precarious status of the millions of Central Asian migrant workers in Russia. So Moscow is mostly concerned with maintaining its status as the region's privileged power, but this is often lead to strategic confusion and an obsession to tactically countering moves by both the United States and China, rather than formulating a coherent long-term vision for future relations. The so-called US-Russian reset has tempered some of this competition, but the Kremlin remains concerned over the region's future orientation, hoping to integrate it into a Russian-led Eurasian Union. What lessons do you see Central Asia holding for other parts of the world, especially the post-Arab Spring Middle East? As in Central Asia, the United States in the Arab world has had trouble juggling its strategic commitments to allies with supporting greater democratization. This inconsistency has been magnified in places like Bahrain, which like Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan hosts vital US military facilities, and where US reaction to the Manama's crackdown has been muted out of concern of losing basing rights. Also, just like China in Central Asia, Gulf states like Qatar now provide alternative sources of international financing that may undercut Western-led organizations like the IMF and World Bank. And just as in aftermath of the so-called Color Revolutions that toppled governments in Eurasia, we now see throughout the Middle East, especially in Egypt, new restrictions being placed on the activities of Western NGOs involved in democracy and human right promotion. While there was a lot of optimism in the West following the Arab Spring, the multipolar context of these political transitions makes their political environment much more akin to the multipolar politics of Central Asia than the post-Cold War moment when the United States was the unchallenged leader of global affairs.